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Save the first date

Standard first dates can be so boring - dinner and a movie, anyone? - so bring back the "wow" factor to ensure a good time

BY MOLLY MACMILLAN • FOR GO! MAGAZINE • MAY 13, 2010

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Sweaty palms, racing hearts and awkward silences — yes, first dates can be intimidating.

These moments can be kept to a minimum, however, with a little thought and consideration in the date planning process. After all, it may be the last first date of the rest of your life.

According to psychotherapist Dr. Michael J. Hurd, there is no fool-proof location for a first date. It all depends on the couple.

"Some people like going to a movie for a first date because a lot of the time you don't have to engage in conversation," Hurd replied. "That's OK, but don't avoid conversation altogether. Use the buffer of the movie as a way to start the evening."

Afterward, he suggested stopping by a restaurant to grab a bite and discuss the movie, if nothing else, but dinner and a movie is a conventional choice, considering all the options available on the peninsula.

Whether the date is going to take place in Salisbury, Ocean City or along the Delaware coastline, choices abound for everyone from active nature-lovers to rainy-day locals.

SKIP THE ANXIETY ON FIRST DATES

Q&A about the sweaty hands and racing heart you face on that first date from psychotherapist Dr. Michael J. Hurd.

1. What causes the anxiety of first dates?

Most often, self-confidence. The solution to anxiety is rational self-talk. If you aren't aware of any good qualities you have, then get this straight before going on any more dates. Put the focus outside yourself — and concentrate on the other person.

2. What are some good icebreakers?

Be ready to talk about yourself and think ahead of time about questions you will likely get, and how you want to answer them. In conversation, ask the other person about him or herself. This will lower your anxiety.

3. How common are first-date jitters?

Almost everyone has some jitters but they're usually not visible to others. They're much more visible to yourself.

4. Are there any settings that make a first date less intimidating?

It depends on your personal preferences and style. Go where you're most comfortable.

5. Any other tips for getting through the big night?

View each new person and experience as an opportunity. Life is a series of experiences, experiments and disappointments. Failures as well as successes, embrace them all.

Tour The Town

Rehoboth Beach bartender Tom Timlin lives in Dewey Beach, but said he's willing to make the trip west to Salisbury for a fun first date.

"First dates are always good," Timlin said, grinning. "My favorite first date is the Salisbury Zoo. It's quaint and cute and free."

Find out more about what makes your locale unique and pretend to be a tourist. Stroll through the zoo or ditch your cars at the beaches and take public transportation to amusements and the Boardwalk.

Tour the Town Options: Visit the Salisbury Zoo or the Boardwalk. Ride the rides. Share a shake. Check out a museum.

Rainy Date

As a conversation starter, weather is a good ice-breaker, but poor conditions can also freeze plans for a day on the beach.

If gale force winds are blowing your plans, relax, there are still many indoor options to add some spark to the date.

Timlin said if weather isn't working out, he still has game in the arcade.

"Its fun because (an arcade) makes you feel like a

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 [Add Your Link Here!](#) kid again," he said.

Rainy Date Options: Indoor mini-golf and ice skating in Ocean City. Arcades, restaurants, concerts and movie theaters throughout the peninsula.

Parks And Rec

For many active individuals, sitting through an entire movie only to change location and sit through a formal dinner sounds pretty stagnant.

Individuals who share this sentiment already have that in common, so when they link up for a date, the planner may want to look into some more innovative outdoor dates.

At Ayers Creek Adventures in Berlin, owner Suzy Taylor said couples make up roughly 60 percent of her clientele.

In addition to tandem kayak and canoe rentals, the business offers eco-tours. During each a full-moon through the summer, a kayak and wine tasting tour is offered, which makes for a memorable date, Taylor said.

"I definitely think the full moon kayak tour would be an impressive first date," she said.

Outdoor Options: Rent a kayak or canoe. Go surfing. Learn how to kite surf. Hike a nature trail. Go biking. Rent a Jet Ski. Go to the beach. Play beach volleyball.

Classic Dinner Date

Since there's always going to be somewhere to share a meal, the mood of the date is going to be the deciding factor on where to dine.

Candlelight might be too much or just enough. Packing a picnic for the park is fun, but a restaurant is more convenient.

Salisbury resident Sharon Hurley said she prefers meaningful, one-on-one conversation for a first date.

"It needs to be somewhat quiet, especially for a first date," Hurley said. "You need to be able to have a conversation and get to know someone."

Fellow Salisbury resident Allan Hope said that, in his mind, an ideal first date destination provides the opportunity for outdoor, casual and fine dining to suit any mood — "it's like you have three venues in one."

Dinner Date Options: Dinner and live music. Dinner theater. Tapas or small bites for sharing. Wine tasting and heavy hors d'oeuvres.



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